

RACHEL RAKOVAN: Hi, I'm Rachel Rakovan. I'm a professor of ecology at the Community College of Beaver County. I'm also board chairman for the Environmental Advisory Board for the township. And I am founder of the ECO Action Nonprofit Organization. I'm here to talk to you about coal mining, direct effects. In my past I lived in Appalachia and coal mining was the cause of cancer, which actually inspired me to become an environmental scientist. Several of my family members have died from cancer.

In particular, my two year old niece and stepfather. Anyhow. So coal mining is the cause of pollution in southern Ohio. And what it does is it causes cancer among people, families, friends, that makes people become addicted to cancer medications. And then what happens after that, it gets in the hands of teenagers, that cancer medications. They become addicted to Oxycontin, and Oxycontin are very expensive, this is a cancer medication, then they divert to heroin and illicit street drugs, which is cheaper, and what they then do is take excess amounts of heroin and they end up in teenage drug overdose. So I have about 60 friends from the time that I was pre-teen that have died from heroin usage that was caused from this chain reaction from coal mining. So, again, in recap, coal mining causes cancer, which then causes people to become addicted to cancer medications, which then contributes to the illicit drug trade and then causes teenage drug overdose. Excuse me. So the direct effects of coal can be accounted for. But the indirect effects and the chain reaction of coal and the cost to communities as well as our lives are concerned -- excuse me. I also wanted to talk about something else. I am a consultant for open -- I'm sorry, it's very personal. But I would like to see us convert to renewable energy sources. Thank you.